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RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS PRIORITY 7485
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RUEHCL/AMCONSUL CASABLANCA PRIORITY 3610
RUEHUNV/USMISSION UNVIE VIENNA AU PRIORITY 0081
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TAGS: [UNESCO](#) [SCUL](#) [PREL](#) [AG](#)

SUBJECT: ALGERIA: FAROUK HOSNI UNESCO CANDIDACY THE TIP OF
THE ICEBERG

REF: STATE 130916

Classified By: Ambassador David D. Pearce; reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) In response to reftel demarche, Algeria will likely adhere to the position adopted in an October 25 Algiers meeting of pan-African culture ministers endorsing the candidacy of Egyptian Farouk Hosni for UNESCO Secretary General. Ambassador told MFA Director General for Arab Affairs Abdelhamid Bouzaher on December 21 that Hosni himself was the problem, as his recent statements revealed him to be divisive and incapable of forming consensus as leader of the organization. Bouzaher did not offer any defense of Hosni's candidacy, but Counselor for Arab League Affairs Ahmed Mourad Merhoum told us separately that whether or not Hosni's candidacy succeeded was unlikely to alter the underlying debate among Arab nations about UNESCO's role in Jerusalem. Merhoum said that press reports had been accurate in indicating that Cairo negotiated with Rabat to have Morocco withdraw its candidate for the fall 2009 election in order to put forward a candidate that could win the support of the entire continent. Algeria's Minister of Culture, Khalida Toumi, stated publicly at the end of October that Hosni's election would mark the beginning of a "cultural revolution" for the continent.

12. (C) However, Merhoum explained that the Algerian and Arab League positions were more complicated. According to Merhoum, the candidacy of Hosni was not relevant to the true problem; namely, that UNESCO was "in turmoil" over what to do about the holy sites of Jerusalem. Merhoum agreed with our assertions that UNESCO should not be a politicized body, but said that Hosni's public statements against Israel merely reflected the debate that was raging within UNESCO itself. Removing Hosni from the equation, he said, would not change this debate, and he urged the U.S. and other nations to focus on a solution that would ensure that "all sites in the Holy Land will be protected, for all three religions." Merhoum said the Arab League favored UNESCO's involvement in protecting sites in Jerusalem, particularly after "its long absence." Merhoum went on to say that the Arab League member states within UNESCO were having trouble defining the mechanism and terms for UNESCO protection of Jerusalem's sites, given Israel's status as "occupying power" and the still unresolved final status of Jerusalem itself.
PEARCE